

# Sears adopts new appearance

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Business writer

Sears' new store at Parkdale Mall, which opens this week, will provide 100 more jobs to the area economy as well as give its customers a taste of the retail industry's future.

Customers can begin shopping at the new Sears location Monday, although the store will conduct grand opening ceremonies on Wednesday. What shoppers will see, promises store manager Bill Taylor, is an early glimpse of what will be common years from now.

Everything is keyed toward lifestyle. Clothes are grouped and displayed by lifestyle, as are the high-tech, automotive and the kitchen wares departments.

Everything is set up in its own smaller shops within the large expanses of the store.

Retailing experts are calling such a format the store of the future.

Sears' Beaumont location is among 662 stores nationally that are receiving a facelift or a totally new structure. All renovations are part of the company's five-year, \$1.7 billion plan to give its stores a better shopping environment for customers.

"It has a real dynamic look," Taylor says of the Beaumont store. "It's not anything like you've ever seen in a Sear's store before."

Sears, the world's largest retailer, finds itself as one of the few actual department stores remaining in the country. Many retail chains, trying to offset the recent market gains of specialty shops, are dropping their hardware,



Staff photo by David Trammell

Sales Manager Ken Robinson prepares for Wednesday's grand opening ceremony at Sears in Parkdale Mall.

heavy appliances and automotive departments in order to concentrate more on housewares and men's and women's apparel.

The marketing tests of these chains suggest that today's

consumer, while making more money, has less time to shop. Therefore, retailers are making it easier for customers to find items.

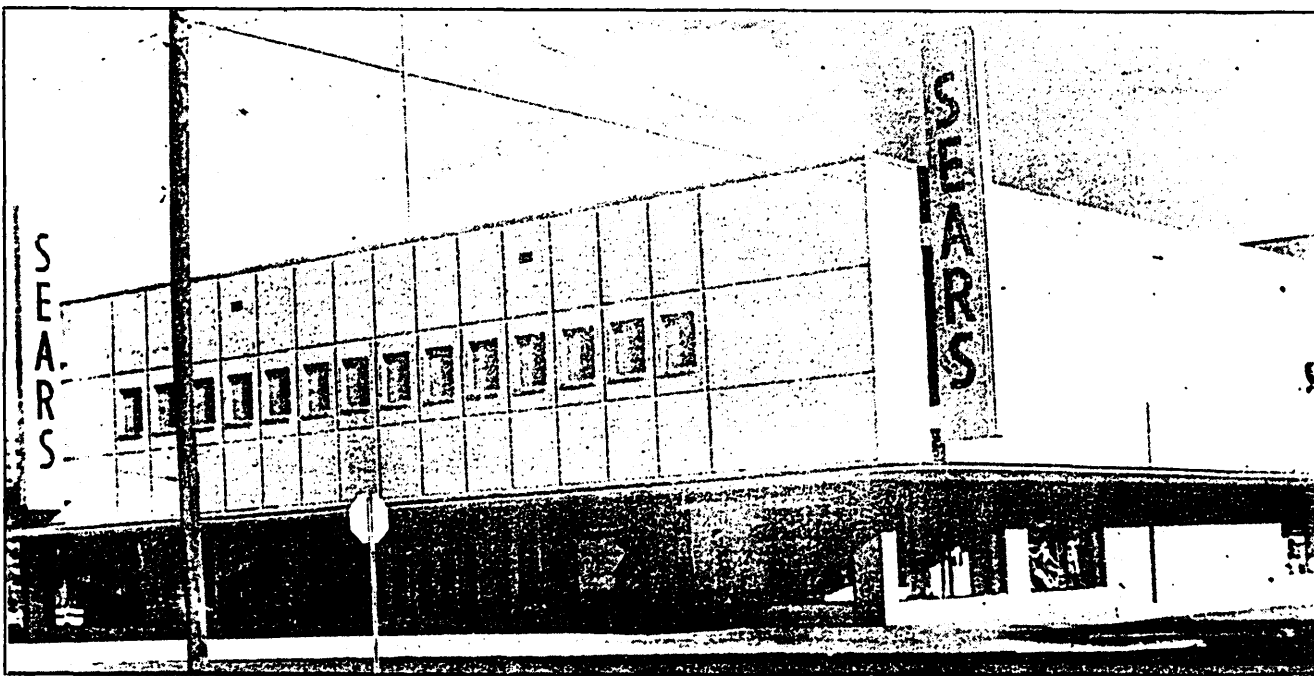
The marketing studies suggest that today's customer will

spend more on clothing and items for the home. Retailers, therefore, are shaping their stores for these preferences.

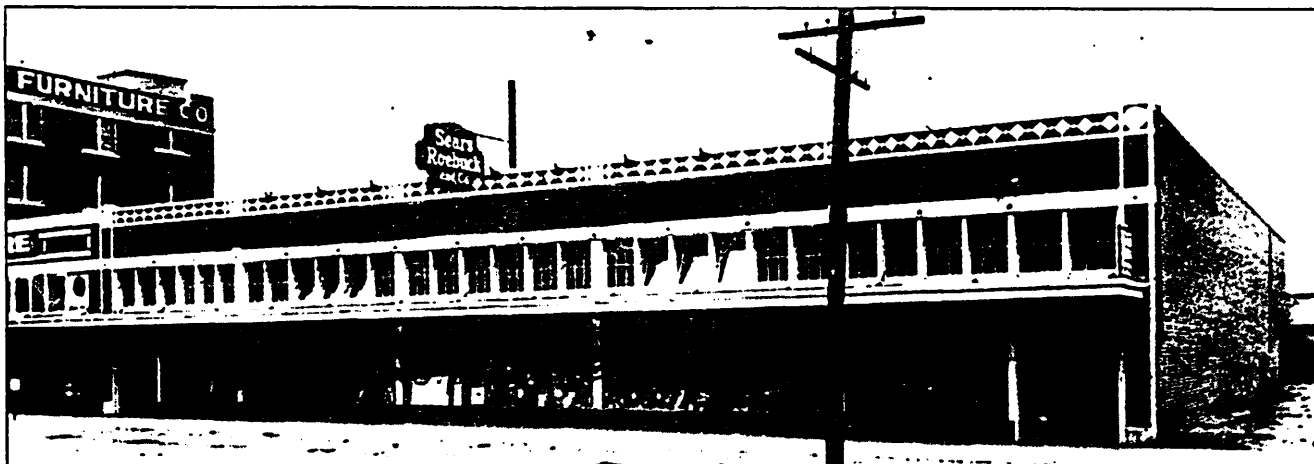
In its new location, Sears is placing emphasis on its apparel, adding more mannequins

and displays, but it is keying on all non-clothing departments as well.

Take the automotive department, Taylor says, "It's not like a parts store. We've put it See \*SEARS, next page



Sears' second Beaumont store, above, was opened for business in 1949 at 350 Magnolia and closed Saturday.



Above is the Park Street building that was the home of Beaumont's first Sears retail store. It was opened in 1928.

## Sears' local history dates back to 1908

When Sears closed the doors on its downtown location Saturday, it ended a 58-year stay in Beaumont's central business district.

Sears opens at Parkdale Mall Monday at 10 a.m. in a 132,500 square-foot store.

Bill Taylor, store manager, said Sears stayed in downtown as long as it could, but decided to follow a national retail trend, moving to the suburban mall.

Sears opened its first store in Beaumont in 1928, then moved to its just-closed location at 350 Magnolia in 1949. Management enlarged the store in 1971 and completed another remodeling project in 1984.

Actually, Sears first began doing business in Beaumont as a catalog outlet in 1908.

Taylor says the downtown building now belongs to Jacobs, Visconti and Jacobs, a Cleveland, Ohio-based firm that manages Parkdale Mall. Firm officials were unavailable for comment.

Sears has a heavy investment in Texas, with 1,064 stores, offices and other operations located in the state. Sears employed 29,897 Texas residents in 1985 and paid \$114,972,130 in state and local taxes.

Nationally, Sears is celebrating its 100th birthday. Richard V. Sears started the company — now the world's largest retail chain — by selling watches from a Northwood, Minn., railroad station.